

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of extending a communication test/measurement agent, comprising:  
providing the communication test/measurement agent with built-in functionality to allow a communication test/measurement system or client to generically communicate with and operate the agent; and  
providing the communication test/measurement agent with built-in functionality to allow the agent to automatically recognize and dynamically incorporate interface-specific plugins that are specific to different types of communication interfaces and which allow the communication test/measurement client or system to communicate with the respective different types of communication interfaces.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the incorporating is done by loading code of a plugin into the agent.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein a plugin is recognized and incorporated after the communication test/measurement agent has been deployed for communications test/measurement and without reprogramming the agent.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein a plugin communicates with an application program that drives a communication interface of the type corresponding to the plugin.
5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the agent provides a basic API to the central communication test/measurement system that is independent of any communication interfaces, and wherein the plugins extend the API for the respective types of interfaces.

6. A method according to claim 5, wherein one plugin for a particular type of communication interface allows communication with different communication interfaces of the that particular type.

7. A method according to claim 5, wherein an extensible language is used to communicate with the API, wherein a base set of commands of the extensible language corresponds to the built-in functionality, and wherein the recognizing and incorporating of a plugin further comprises extending the extensible language with additional verbs that are specific to the plugin.

8. A method of communication with network analysis software, the method comprising:  
sending requests from a communication testing console to a communication agent;  
receiving the requests at the agent;  
when a first one of the requests is directed to a communication interface, handling the first request with a plugin of the agent that is specific to the type of the communication interface;  
and  
when a second one of the requests is not directed to a communication interface, handling the second request with a common generic portion of the agent.

9. A method according to claim 8, wherein the plugin responds to the first one of the requests with a response received from an application program that drives the communication interface to which the first request is directed.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein the common generic portion of the agent handles the second request by generating a response to the second request.

11. A method of extending a communication agent that provides a communication point for a console of a communication test/measurement system, the method comprising:

deploying the communication agent, where the communication agent is deployed on a computing device comprising a communication interface and communicates with the communication interface using a driver application program, and where the console programmatically accesses the agent and accesses the interface through the agent; and

after the deploying, making the deployed communication agent aware of a new communication interface by installing on the computing device plugin software that can handle commands specific to the new communication interface, where the agent self-recognizes the plugin software and self-integrates the plugin software, whereby the plugin software becomes part of the agent and allows the console to send commands to the new communication interface.

12. A communication test/measurement agent, comprising:

built-in code to allow a central communication test/measurement system to generically communicate with and operate the agent; and

built-in code to allow the agent to automatically recognize and dynamically incorporate interface-specific plugins that are specific to different types of communication interfaces and which allow the network test/measurement system to communicate with the respective different types of communication interfaces.

13. A communication/test measurement agent according to claim 12, further comprising an interface table comprising entries, wherein the agent adds an entry in the interface table to correspond to a new plugin which the agent has incorporated.

14. A method according to claim 13, wherein entries in the interface table identify a plugin for a type of communication interface and a corresponding communication interface of that type.

15. A machine-readable storage storing information enabling a network test/measurement agent to perform a process, the process comprising:

receiving and processing generic communications from a central communication test/measurement system to generically operate the network test/measurement agent; and

recognizing and dynamically incorporating into the network test/measurement agent interface-specific plugins that are specific to different types of communication interfaces and which allow the central communication test/measurement system to communicate with the respective different types of communication interfaces.